THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

VESPERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

(CORRESPONDING WITH THE MANUAL)

SET TO SIMPLE PLAINCHANT

AND EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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VESPERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

A MINIMUM GUIDE TO SINGING PLAINCHANT

I. NOTATION.

(a) The Staff of four lines is simpler to read from than that of five, especially to those who are acquainted with Tonic Solfa; for instead of Treble and Eass Clef-signatures, there are two which each indicate a degree on the Solfa scale, namely:

and —

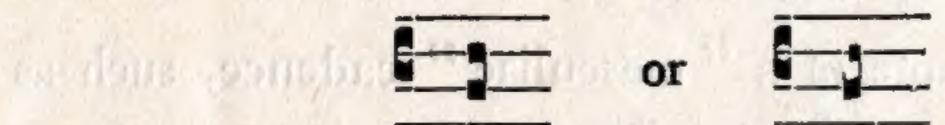
The first of these, on whichever line it stands, makes that line Doh. The other makes the line on which it stands, Fa

Only this have we to remember in order to be able to make out any plainchant melody we please¹.

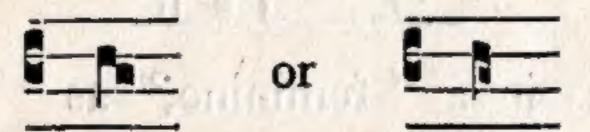
(b) The varying shapes of the printed notes do not affect the Time of the music. They are derived, simply through the technique of manuscript copying, from the notation of the ninth century (which itself had an earlier origin).

One or two elucidations, however, are needed:

(i) In groups of two notes, such as

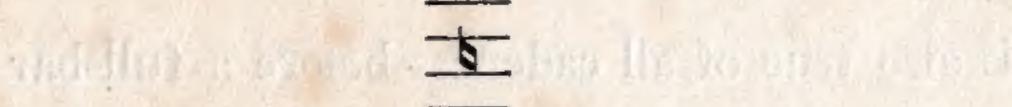


the lower one is sung first; while in these cases



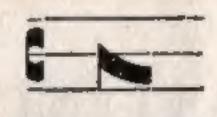
the higher one is first.

Occasionally the Flat sign is placed in one of the spaces, with or without a Clef-signature. That space is "ti"; but the



flattens all notes on it to "ta." Otherwise, if it occurs in front of a note, that note only is flattened, and usually contradicted later by a "natural."

(ii) The following stands for two notes:



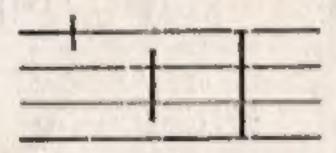
namely, the line or space on which it begins, and the line or space which it reaches at the end of its curve. It is always followed by a third note printed adjacently, as



(iii) The effect of two or more notes adjacent on the same line or space is that of "tied" notes in modern music:



(c) The music is punctuated, rather on the analogy of verbal periods, by the following vertical lines on the staff:



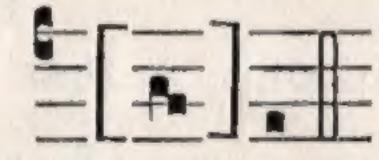
which require the preceding note (or pair of notes) to be lengthened. Their functions are further distinguished in II (i) below.

II.

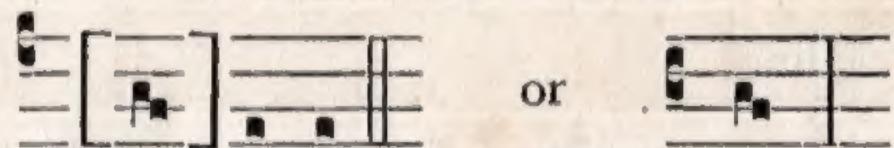
TIME.

All the notes in a plainchant melody are of equal Time-value, with the following modifications: —

(i) The single note of a "masculine" cadence, such as

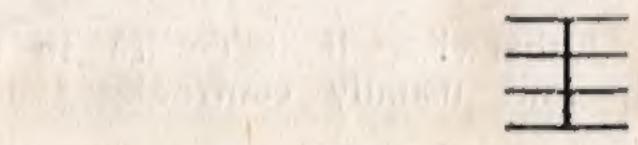


and the pair of notes in a "feminine," as



are each of double length; i.e., they are to other notes as a crotchet is to a quaver.

This is also true of all cadences before a full-bar



and of most cadences before a half-bar

三

or a quarter-bar.



Before a quarter-bar breath may be taken, but it is often desirable, having doubled the preceding note or group, to sing straight on. At the half-bar and full-bar breath will normally be taken—at the half-bar without breaking the rhythm, at the full-bar allowing a full beat's rest in addicion to the doubling.

(ii) In certain groups of three notes² printed thus



the middle note is very slightly lengthened.

(iii) The "barbed" note in groups such as



is sung lightly, and causes the preceding note to be nearly doubled in length³.

(iv) As plainchant owes its origin to words, the various syllables, according to the time it takes to pronounce them, are entitled to modify the note-lengths in a very slight degree. This is particularly true in the case of psalm-verses.

III.

RHYTHM.

"Time," for the purpose of this Guide, is concerned with the length of the notes in plainchant: with the exceptions in (i), (ii) and (iii) above, the notes are of uniform length and produce a movement that is regular.

"Rhythm" tells us how to manage this movement, for, without some kind of "rise and fall" it would be wearisome. Depending

² P. ²¹, Antiphon 3, on "of(-fer)"; p. ²², Ant. 5, on "peace"; Ant. to Magnificat, on "(sa-)cred"; p. ²³, top line, "giv(-en)."

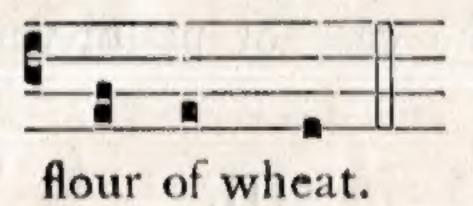
For full information on questions of Time and Rhythm, it is very desirable to consult "Liber usualis" (obtainable at Messrs, George E. J. Coldwell, Ltd., 17, Red Lion Passage, W.C.1).

on certain principles, therefore, the notes are conceived of in rhythmic "groups" of two or three, of which the first note is stressed. If (in singing) our mind knows where these stresses should be, we translate them into our performance with the result that the music at once becomes "alive."

It is essential, before beginning to sing a piece of plainchant, to know where these stresses should be made. The following rules may help us to find out:

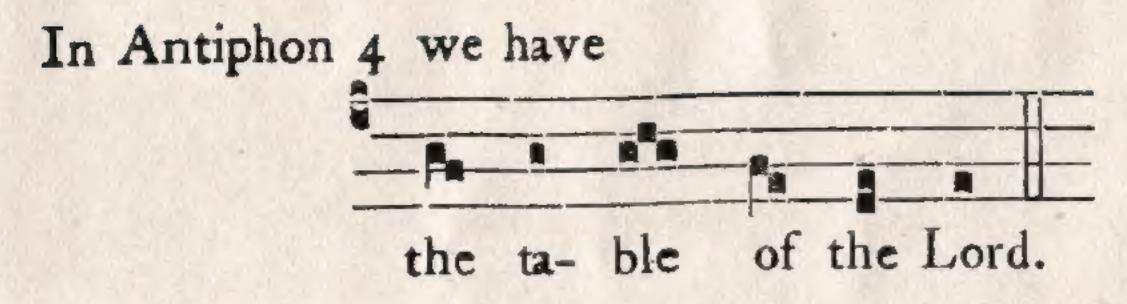
- (i) The first note of a "neum" (that is, a collection of two or more notes sung to a single syllable) is almost always stressed⁴.
- (ii) Look at the last note of the melody. It is of double length⁵, or in other words, "worth two beats" (of which the first, we remember, is stressed), and is therefore equivalent to one "group."
- (iii) Work backwards from this last note. In a feminine cadence the preceding note is also of double length; in which case we have made out two little groups, each of two beats.
- (iv) We must now look for another group. This may either consist of single notes or be a neum. To find out where the stress comes, it is easier to look backwards, immediately before the cadence, for the nearest neum.

For examples, let us look at certain of the Antiphons in Vespers of the Blessed Sacrament. In Antiphon 5 we have



Here "wheat" = one group of two beats; "of" is a single note; but "flour" is a neum of two notes, of which the first receives the stress. The single note is therefore taken with the two-note neum to make a rhythmic group of three beats.

The two exceptions are mentioned above in 2 (ii), where the slightly lengthened middle note also bears the stress, and neums in which a "tied" note occurs, as (see 1 (b) iii) where the first of the tied notes is stressed.



Here "Lord"=two beats, "the "=two, "of "=two, "ble"= three; "ta-" is taken with "the" to make another group of three. So work backwards as far as "the children" and see how the melody is rhythmically analysed. The word "may" is isolated; on which account it is reckoned as the third note of a group of three beats, of which the first two are on the syllable "(bran-)ches" before the dotted line⁶. In the same Antiphon "branches" makes a

feminine cadence (before the dotted lines).

Let us turn again to Antiphon 5. "With the" makes a group of two in single notes. The last note of "us"=two; "fill—" is a neum of five notes, of which the first two make one group, while the two tied notes (the first being stressed) make another. With the last note of the neum they would make a group of three, were it not that "—eth" would then be isolated. "—eth" therefore has to be taken with the last note of the preceding neum to make a group of two. Further back, "bor—" is two groups of two; the three single notes "in the Church" make a group of three, while the neum "peace" is of the kind mentioned in I (b) ii, where the middle note is slightly prolonged and hence stressed. The first note of the neum is isolated; so, like "may" above, it is taken with a Rest to make the second of a group of two.

All the cadences of the Office hymn are masculine, but the rhythm of the rest of the melody (being practically "note for note") is, like the recited portions of the psalm-tones, governed by the

natural accent of the words.

In cases of doubt (as the long neum at the end of the Y. and Ry.) it is better to refer to the "Liber usualis" where all the melodies are "rhymed" in an exact manner. In that particular instance, the grouping (working from the end) is 2. 3. 2. 3.



⁶ The dotted line is equivalent to a quarter-bar.

The above Guide could not have been written without a study of some of the Text-books published by the Benedictines of Solesmes, nor without a good deal of practical coaching in the past and correction for the occasion from Miss Close—that authoritative pupil of Dr. G. H. Palmer (whose pointing for the psalms and versions of the Antiphons I have adopted).

The Guide is notable for containing hardly any technical terms. This may make it simple, but is not altogether wise; for in an attempt to be brief I may well be accused of being inaccurate, not wilfully but through feeling obliged for shortness' sake to leave out things which would so much

help to leave an unmistakeable impression.

R.L.S.

VESPERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

[Note. Priest and people should stand throughout the office from the beginning to May the souls inclusive, except for the psalms and their antiphons, when sitting is allowable and usual.]

Hail Mary. Our Father. GOD, make speed to save me. Ry. O Lord, make haste Glo-ry be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the to help me. Ho-ly Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world with-out end. A-men. Al-le- lu- ia. From Septuagesima to Easter, in place of Alleluia is sung:-Praise be to thee, O Lord, King of e- ter-nal glo- ry. Tone i. I Antiphon I

AHRIST the Lord,* a Priest for ever after the order of Mel-chi-se-

^{*} At First and Second Vespers of Corpus Christi and of its Octave day, the Antiphons before the psalms and Magnificat are sung complete; otherwise they are intoned as far as the asterisk only.

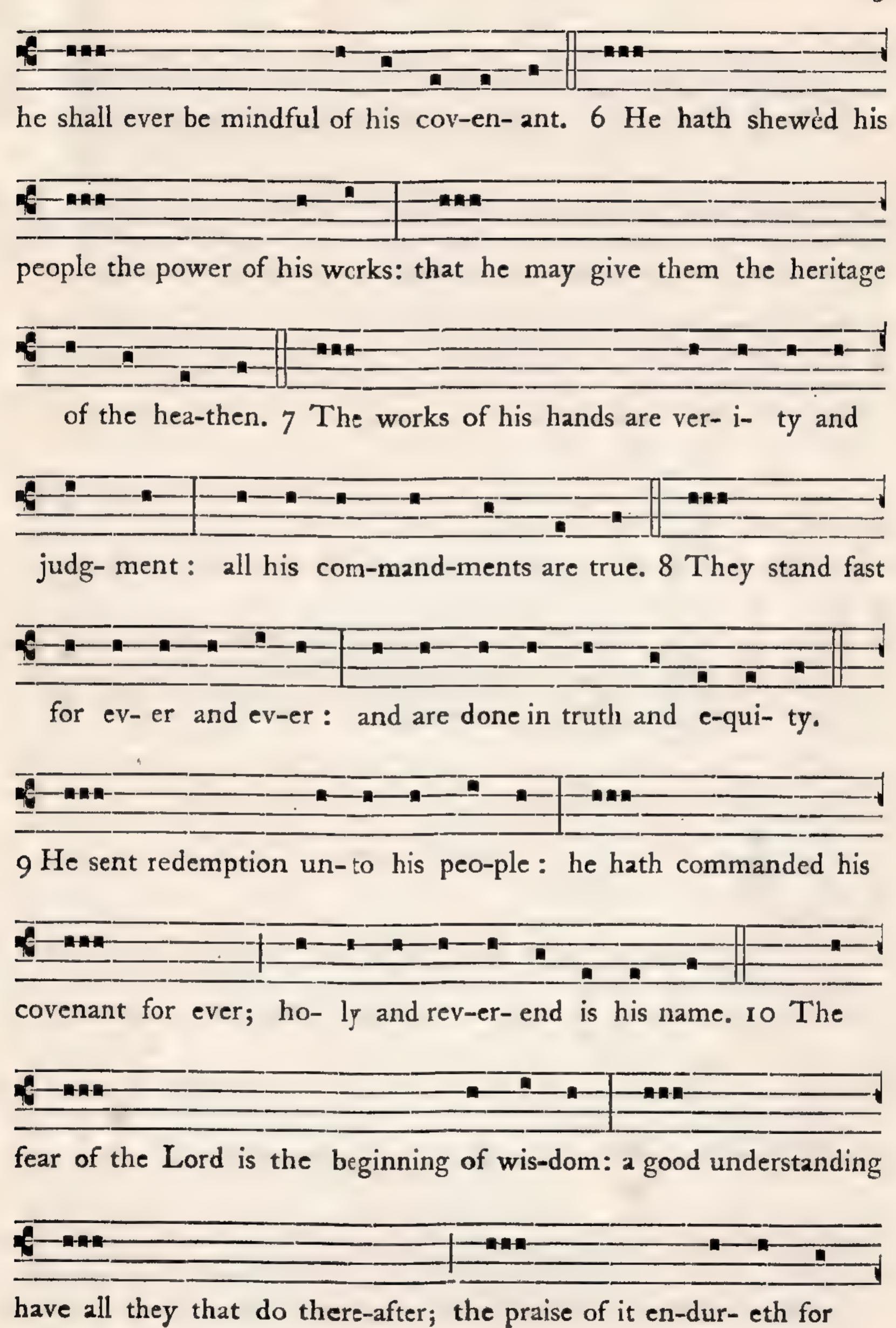




† Alleluia is added in Eastertide only.

re-mem-brance. 5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him:

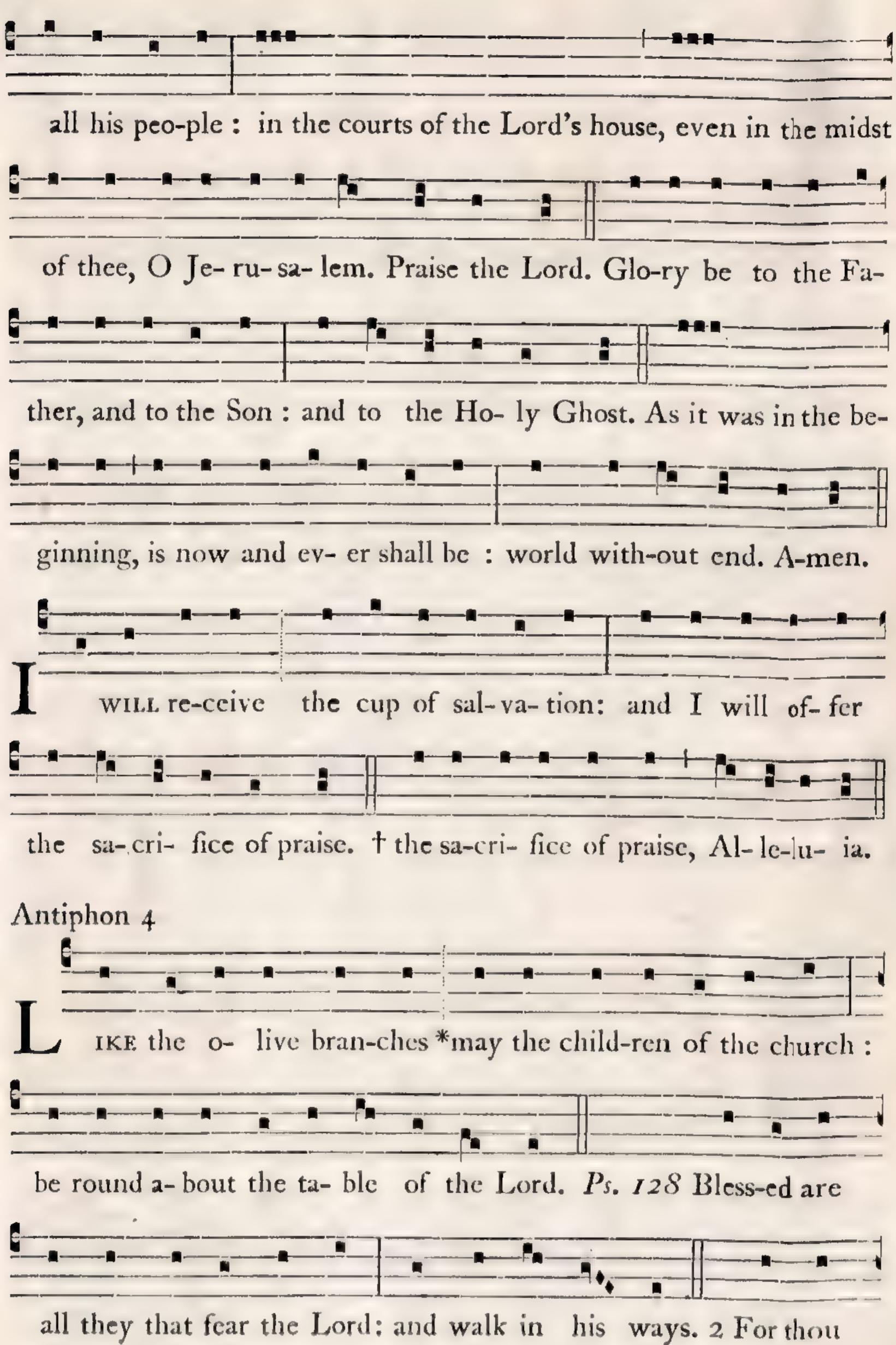
hath so done his mar-vel-lous works: that they ought to be had in



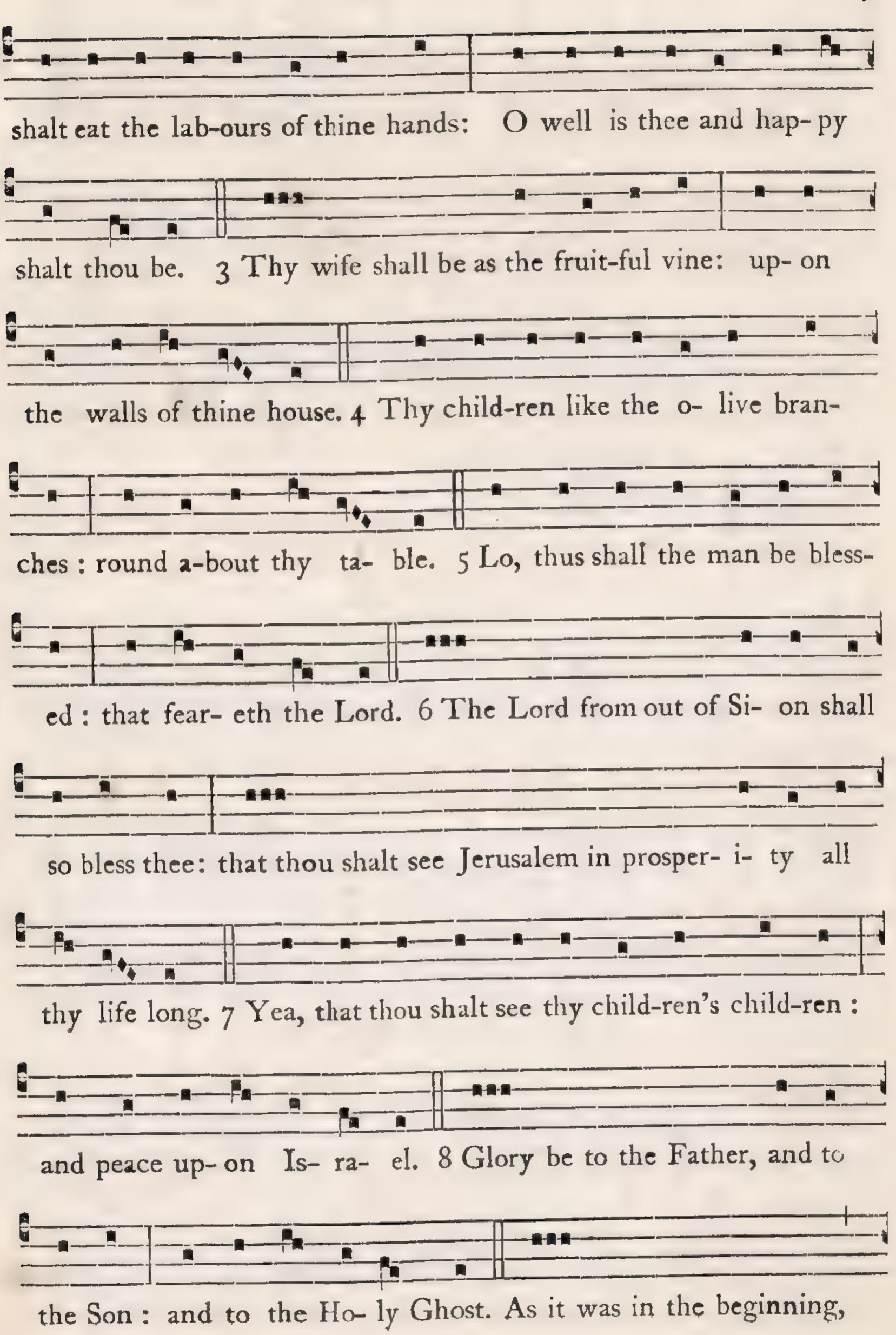


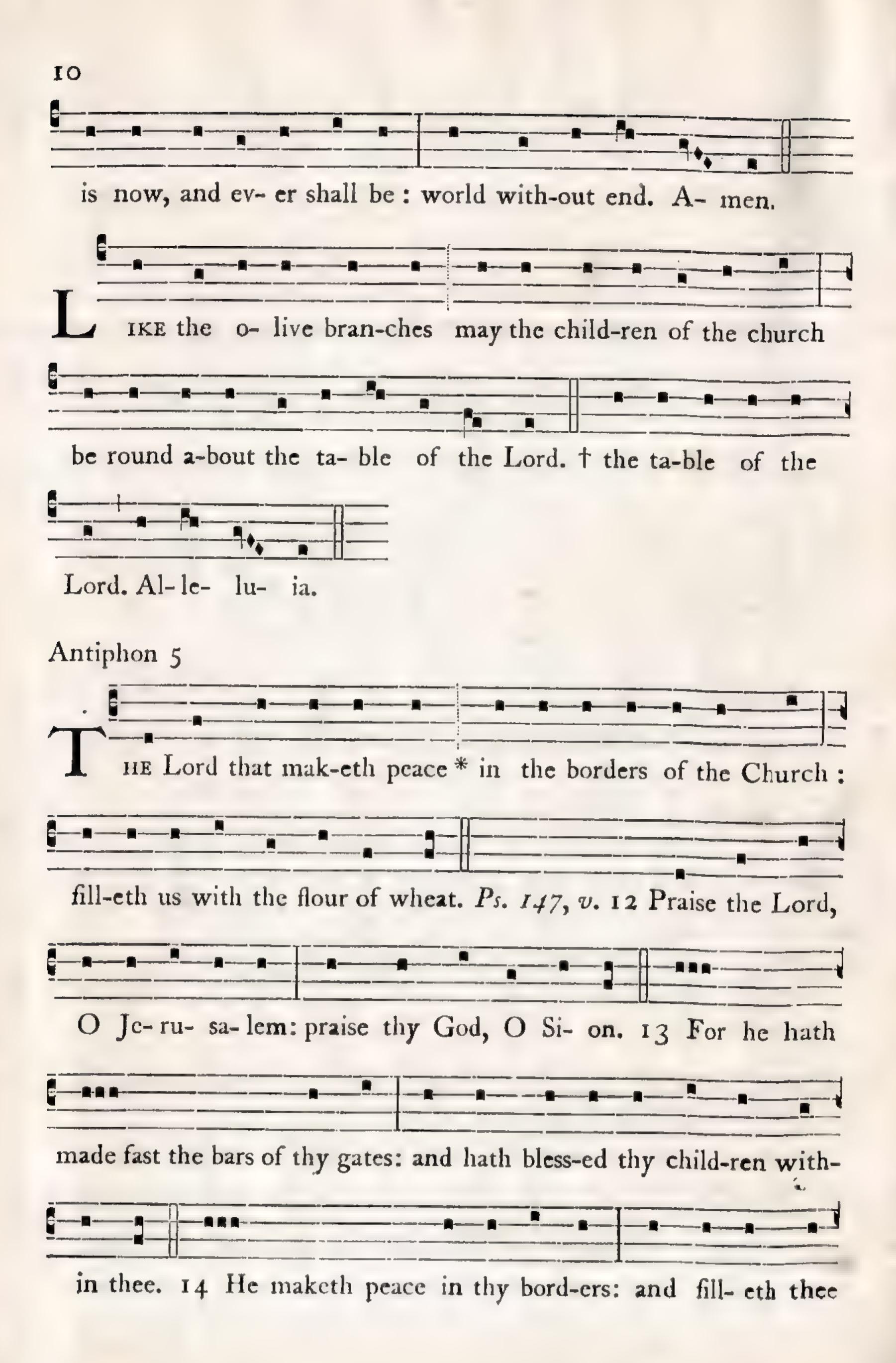


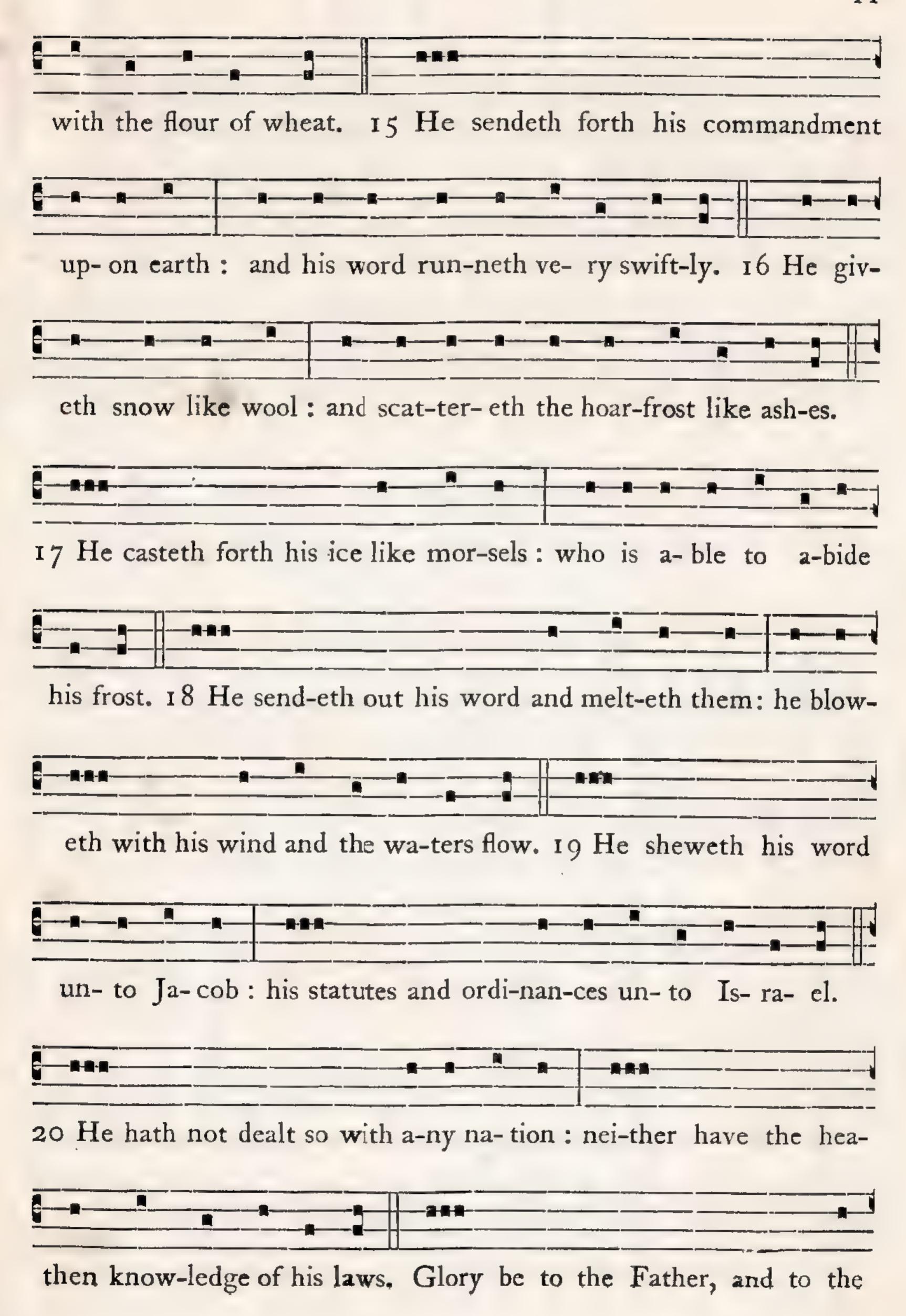


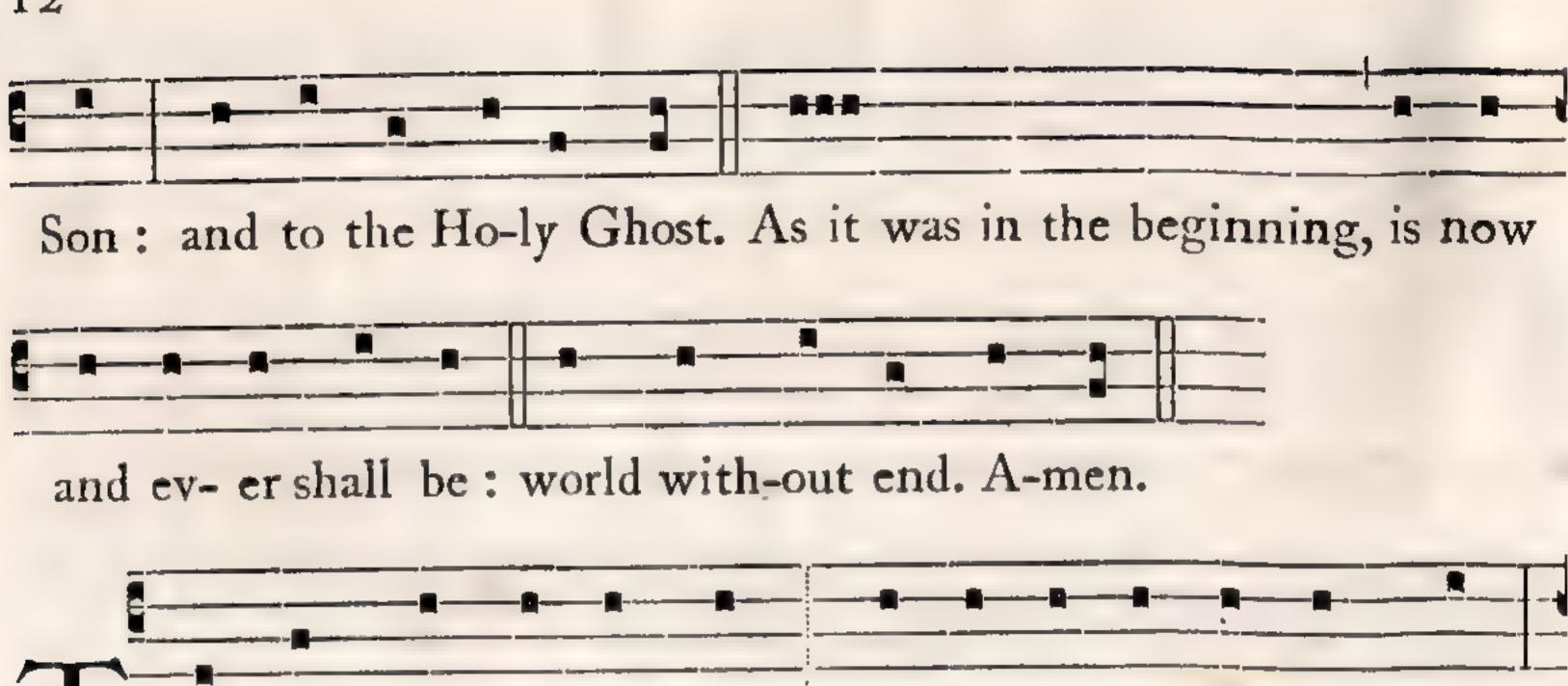










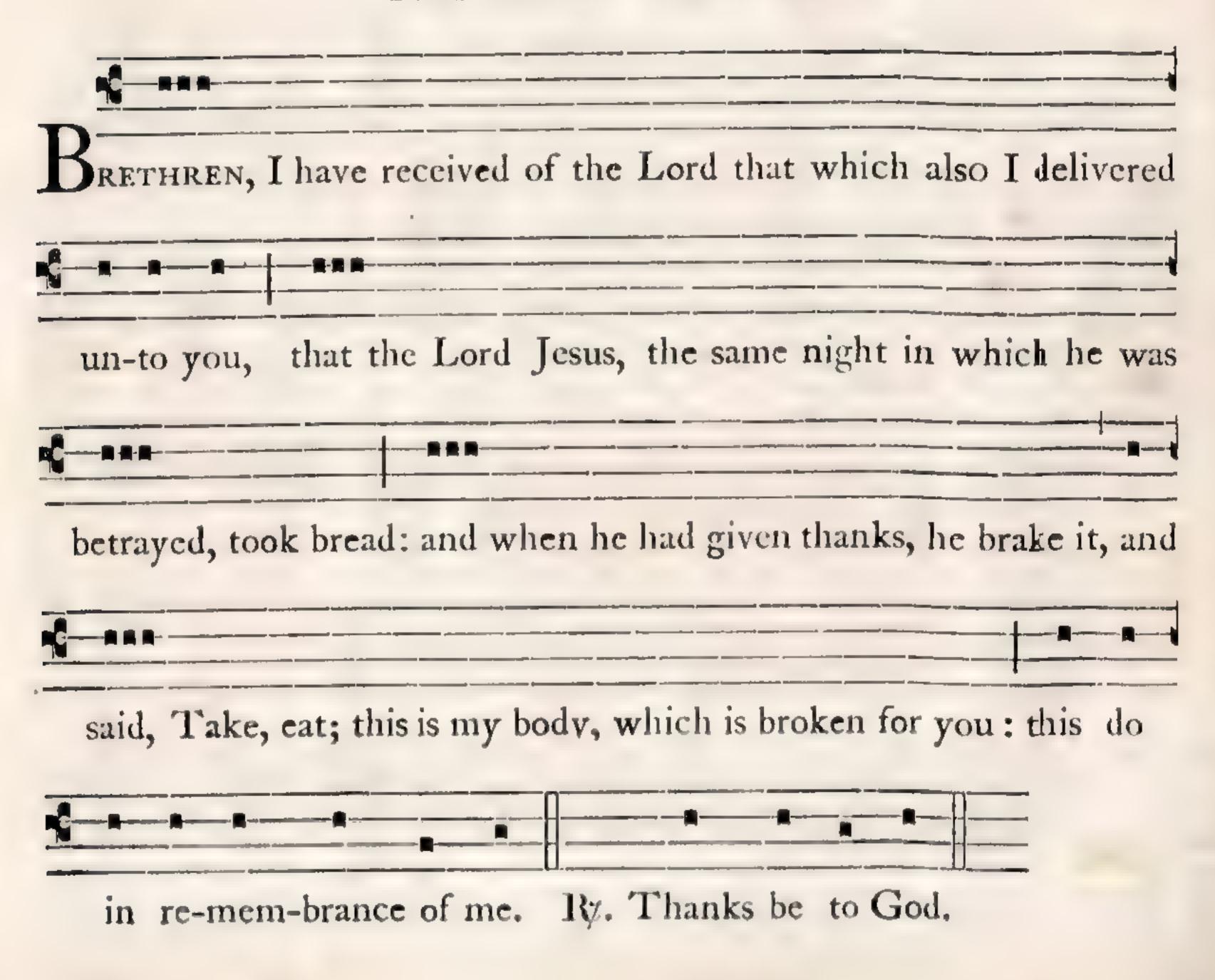


fill-eth us with the flour of wheat. † the flour of wheat. Al-le-lu-ia.

HE Lord that mak-eth peace

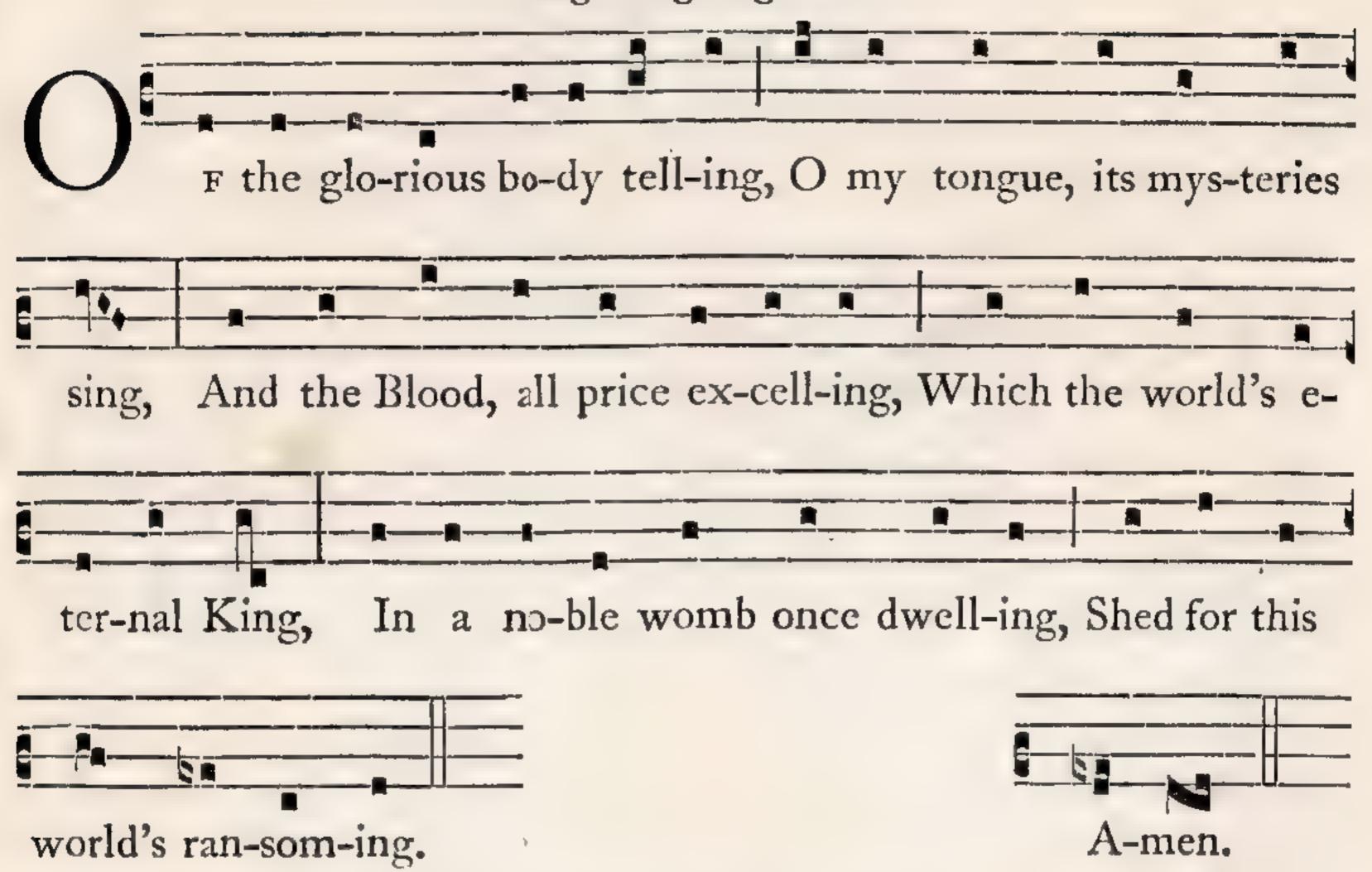
in the bord-ers of the Church:

THE SHORT CHAPTER



HYMN

Pange lingua gloriosi



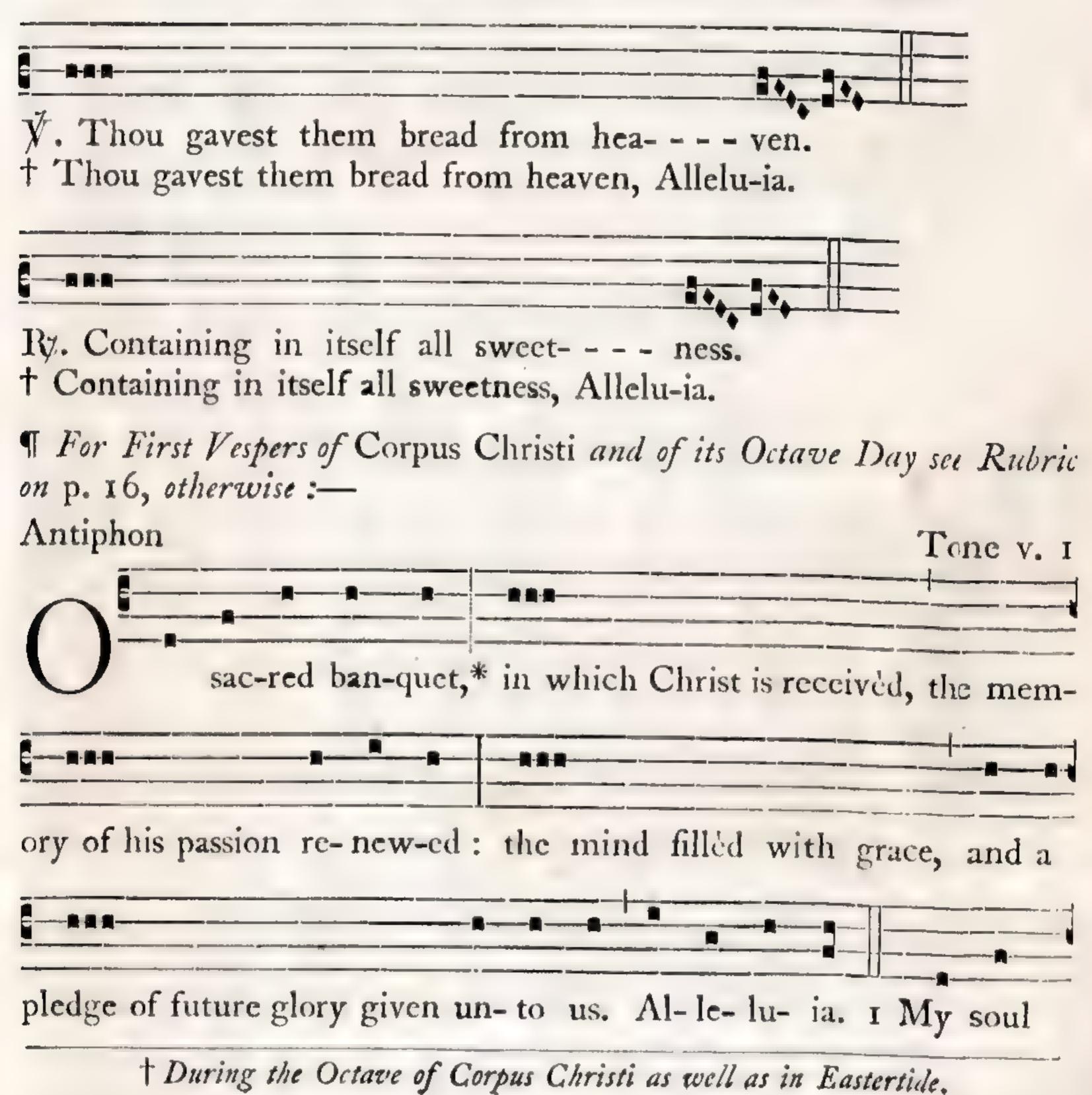
Given for us, for us descending,
Of a Virgin to proceed,
Man with man in converse blending,
Scattered he the Gospel seed,
Till his sojourn drew to ending,
Which he closed in wondrous deed.

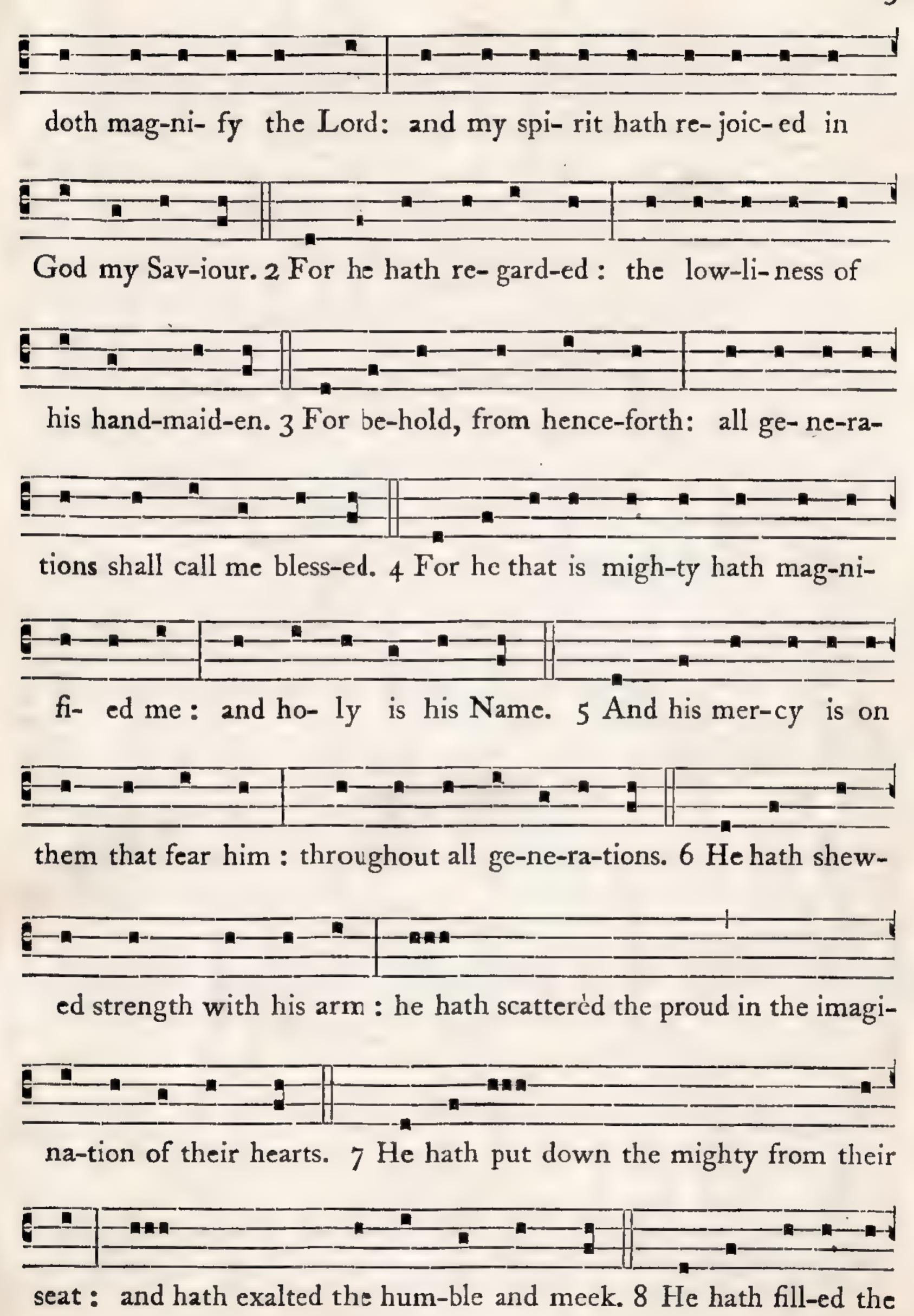
At the last great Supper lying
Circled by his brethren's band,
Meekly with the law complying,
First he finished its command,
Then, immortal Food supplying,
Gave himself with his own hand.

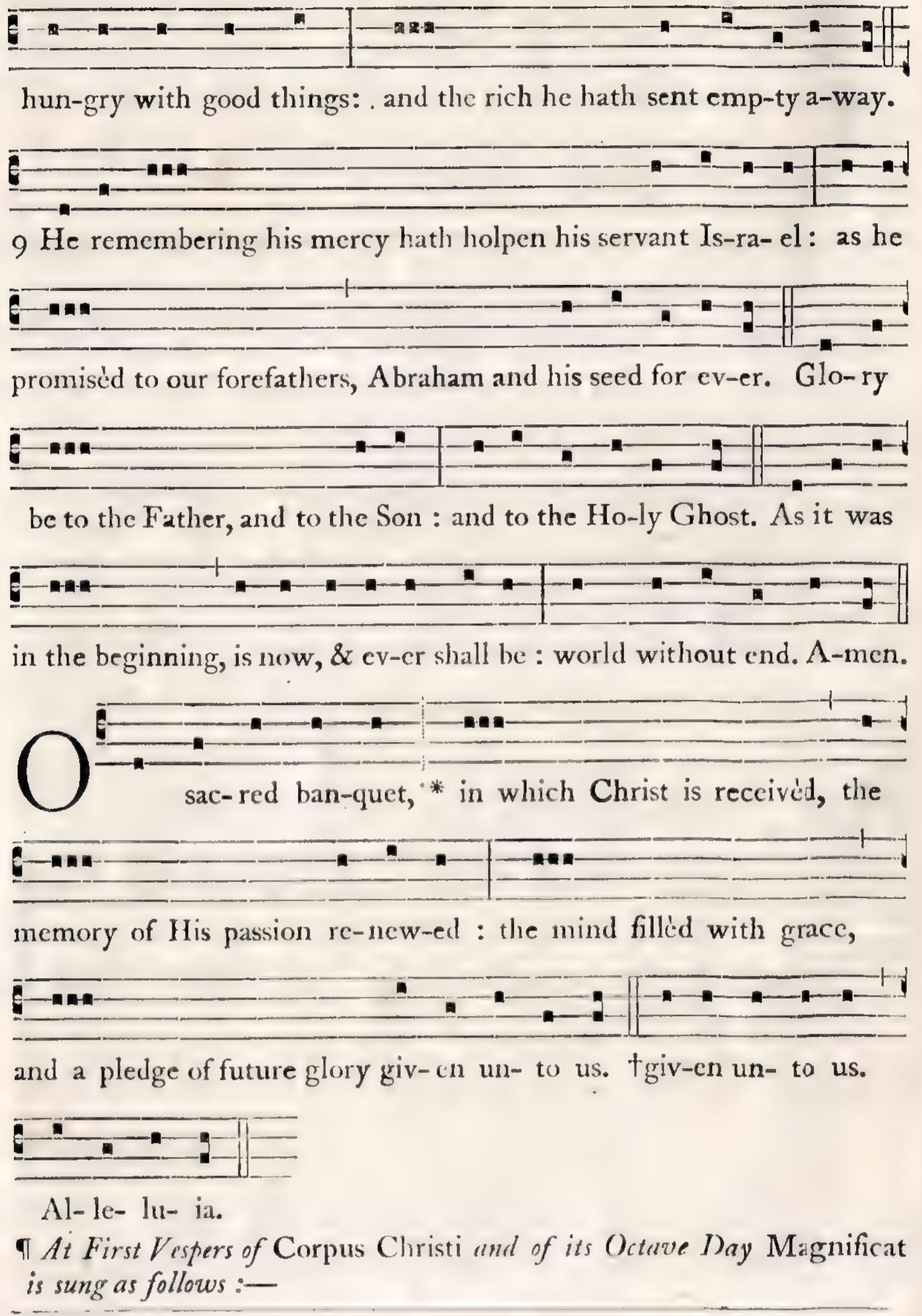
Word made Flesh, by word he maketh Very bread his Flesh to be;
Man in wine Christ's Blood partaketh:
And if senses fail to see,
Faith alone the true heart waketh
To behold the mystery.

Therefore we, before him bending,
This great Sacrament revere;
Types and shadows have their ending,
For the newer rite is here;
Faith, our outward sense befriending,
Makes the inward vision clear.

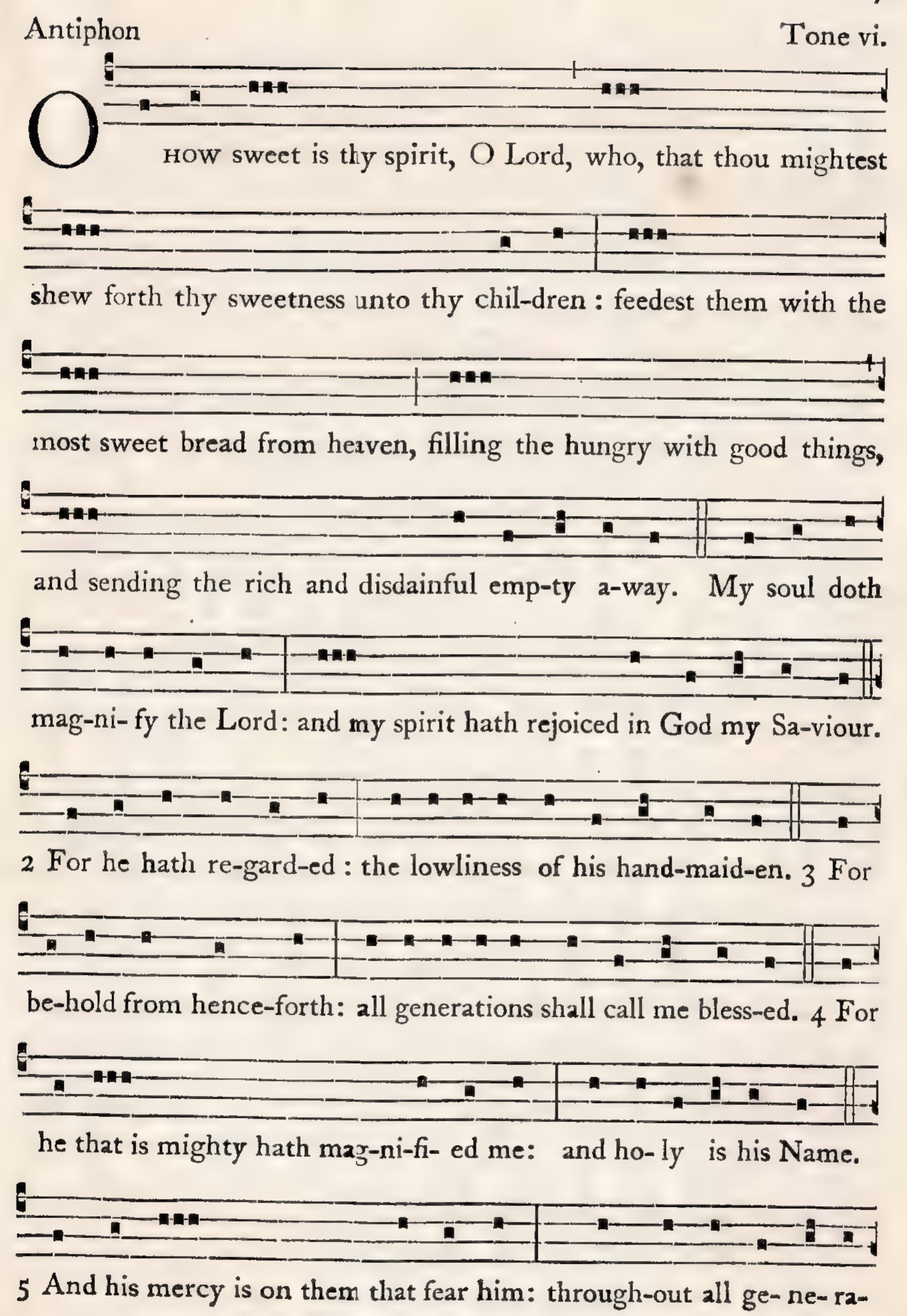
Glory let us give, and blessing
To the Father and the Son;
Honour, might and praise addressing,
While eternal ages run;
Ever too his love confessing,
Who, from both, with both is one. Amen.





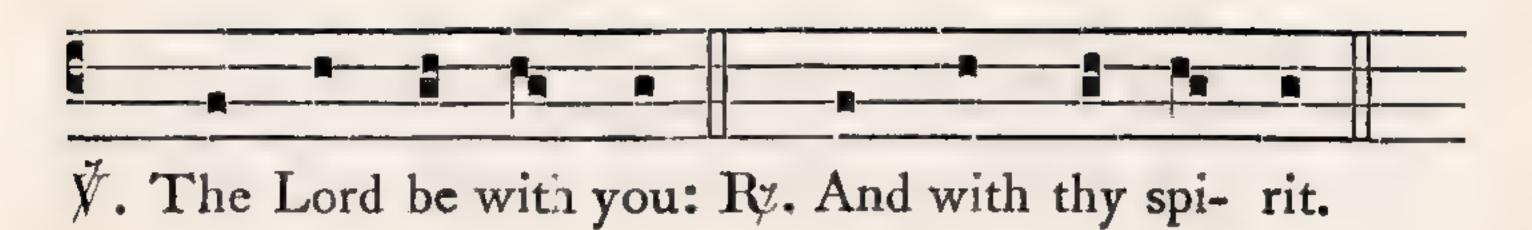


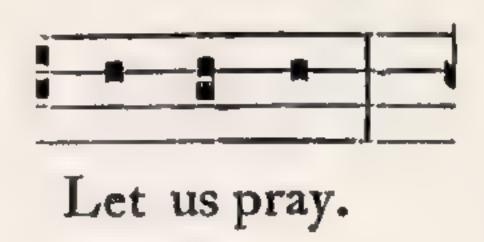
[†] See note on p. 14.

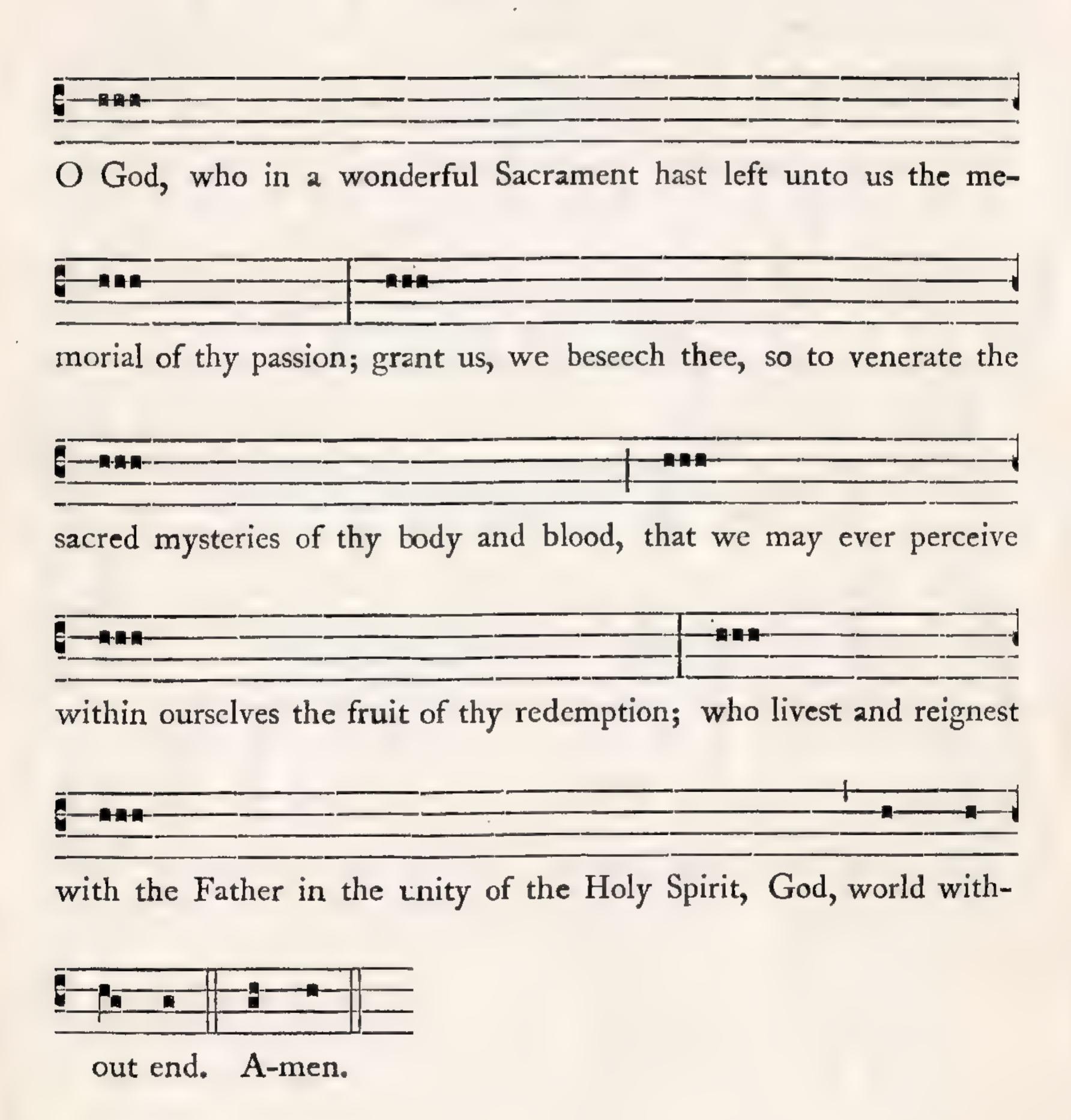




Repeat Antiphon on p. 17.









V. The Lord be with you: Ry. And with thy Spi- rit.



V. Let us bless the Lord: Ry. Thanks be to God.

May the souls of the Faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Rt. Amen.

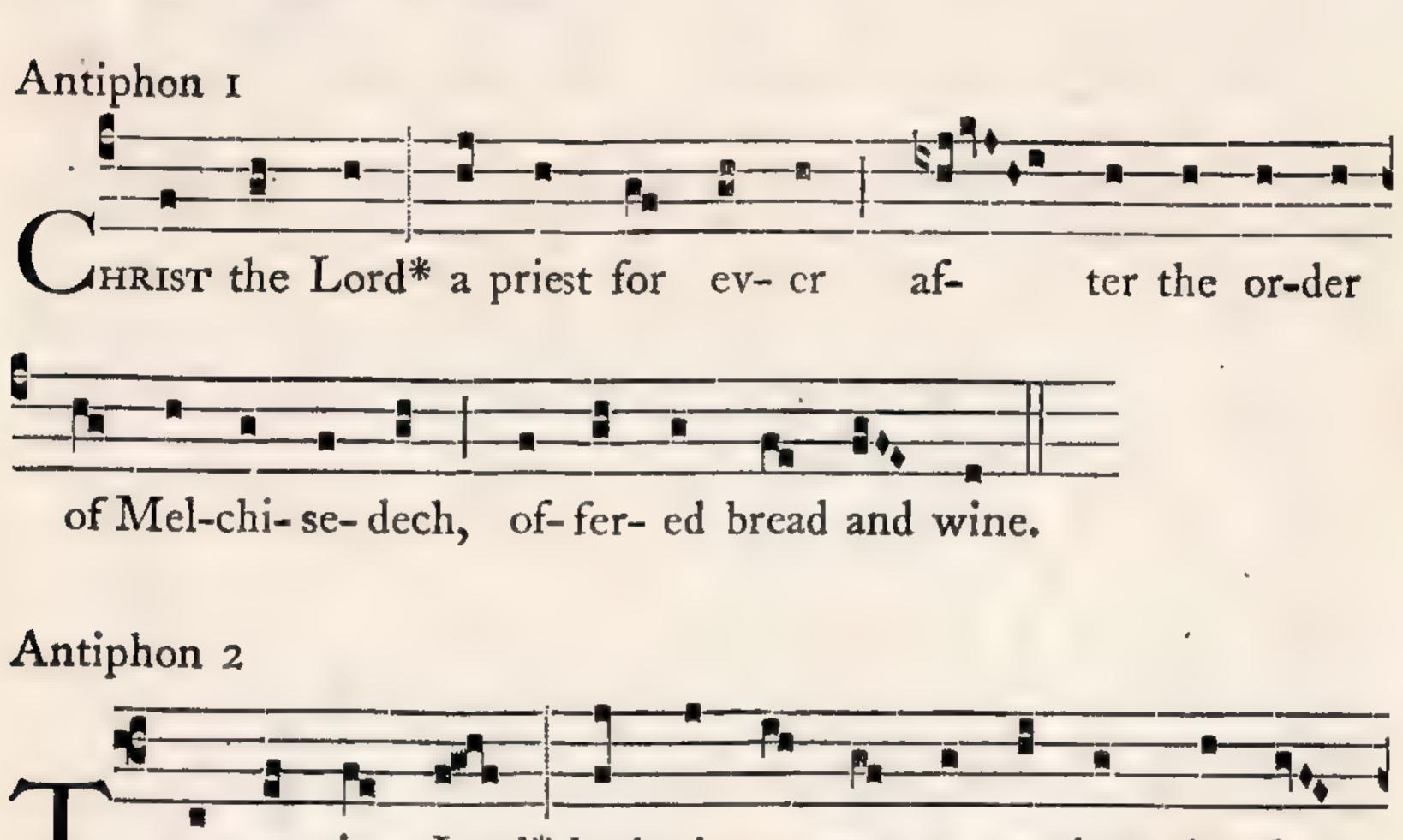
Our Father.

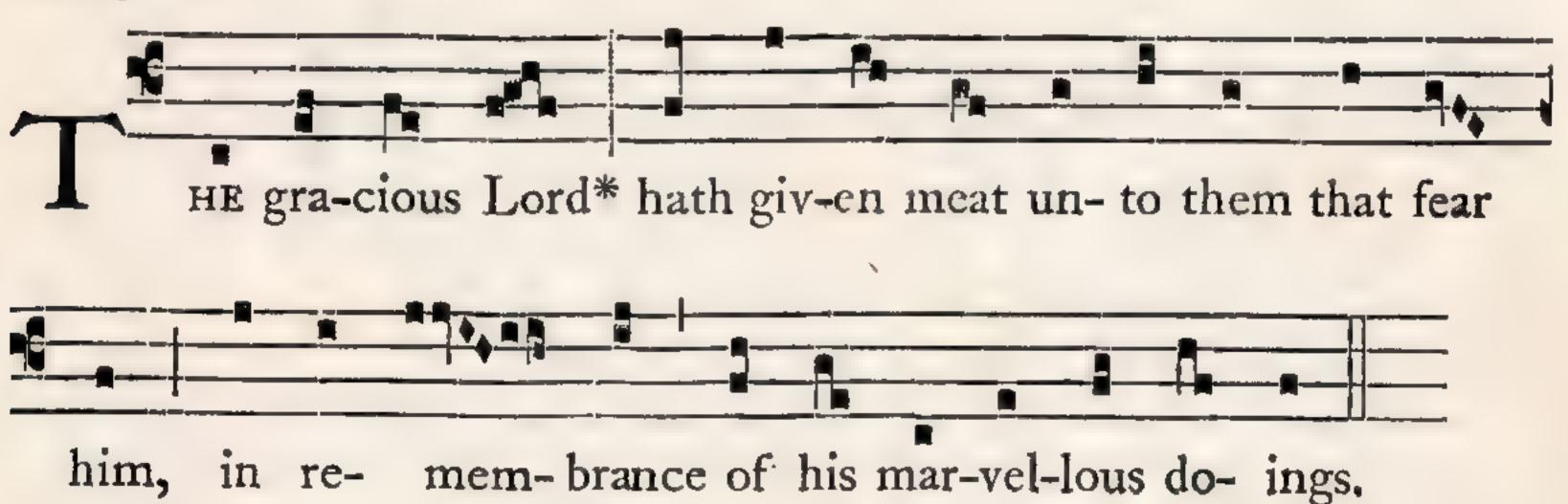
V. The Lord grant us his peace: Ry. And life everlasting. Amen.

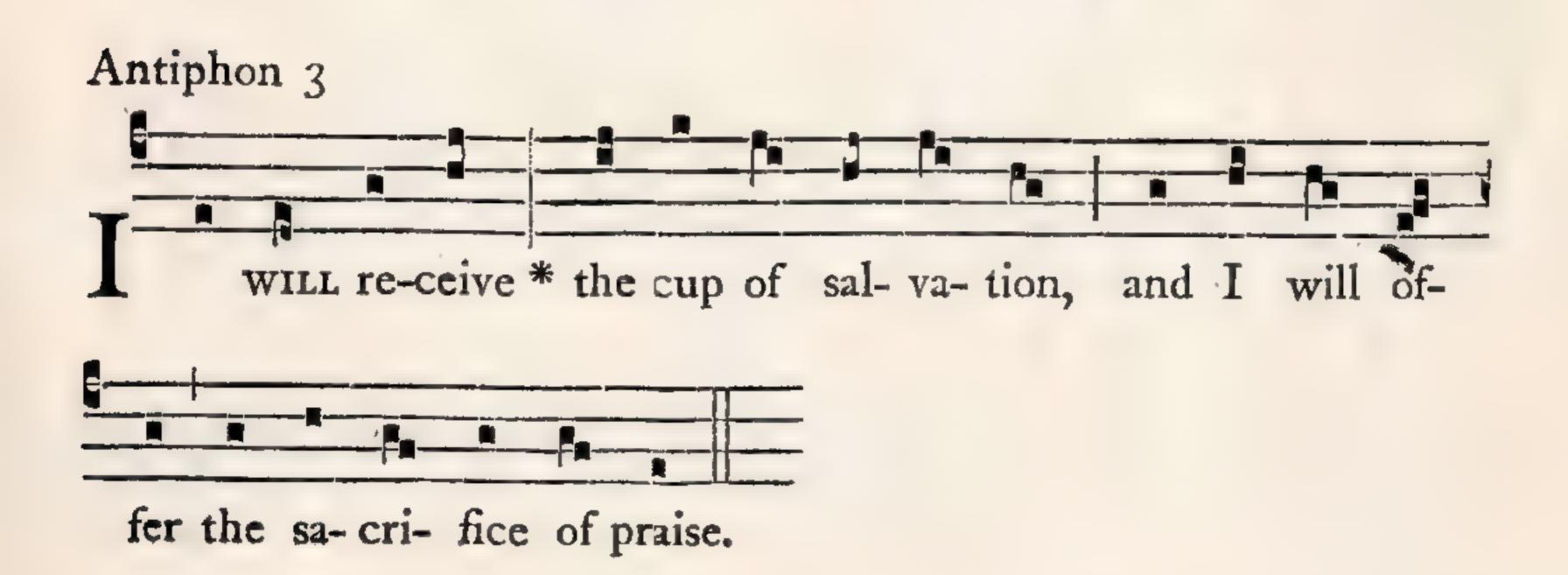
APPENDICES

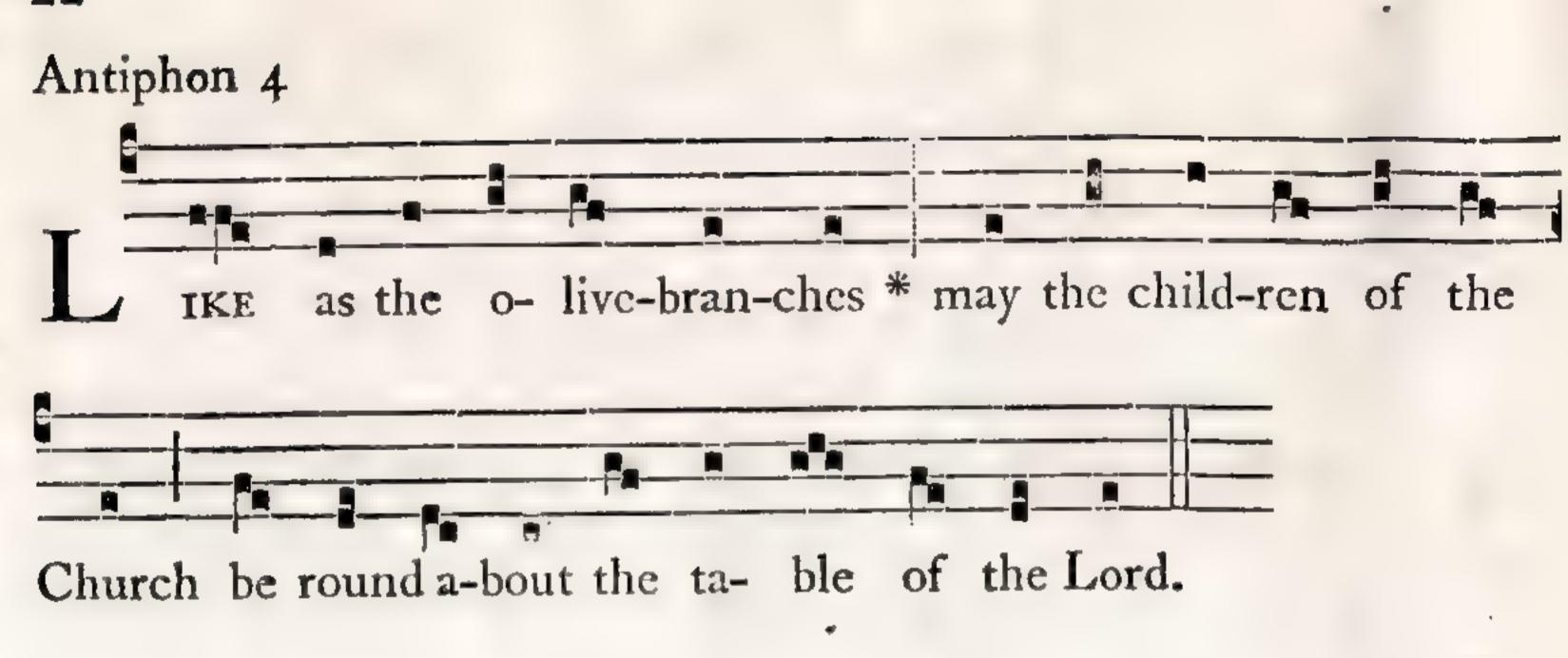
A.

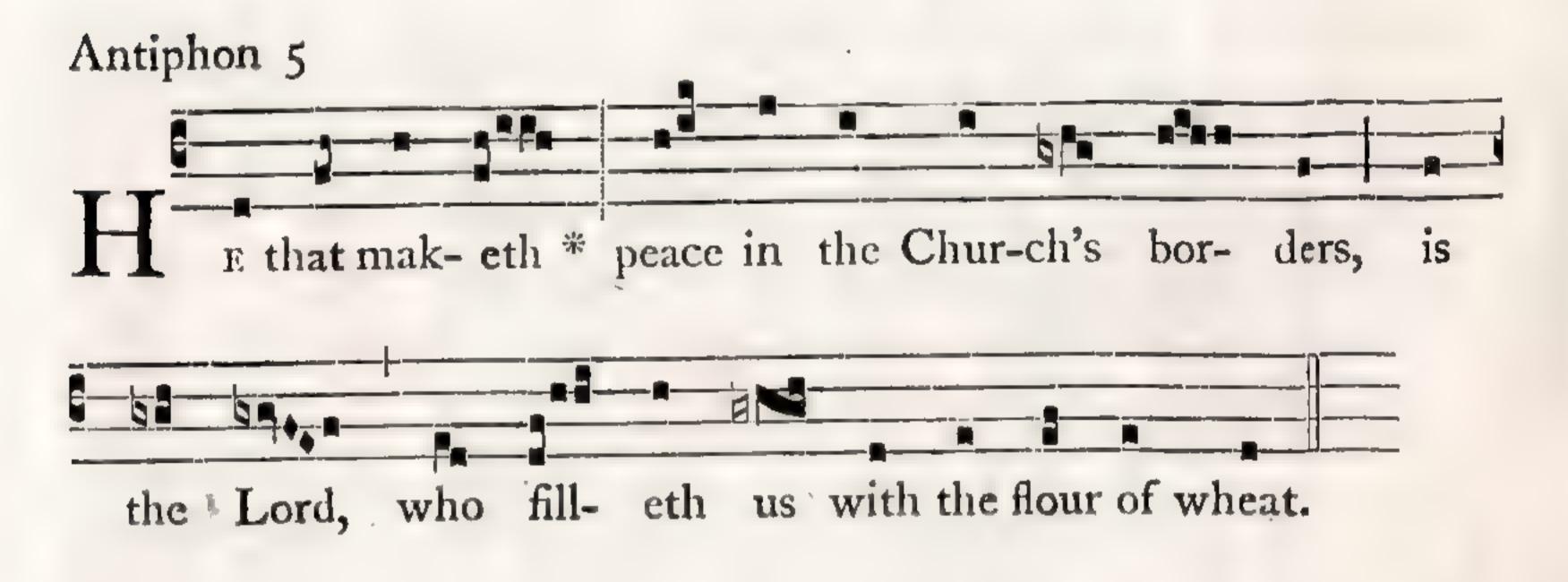
Alternative versions of the Antiphons to the psalms and Magnificat (with Tones and Endings as above).



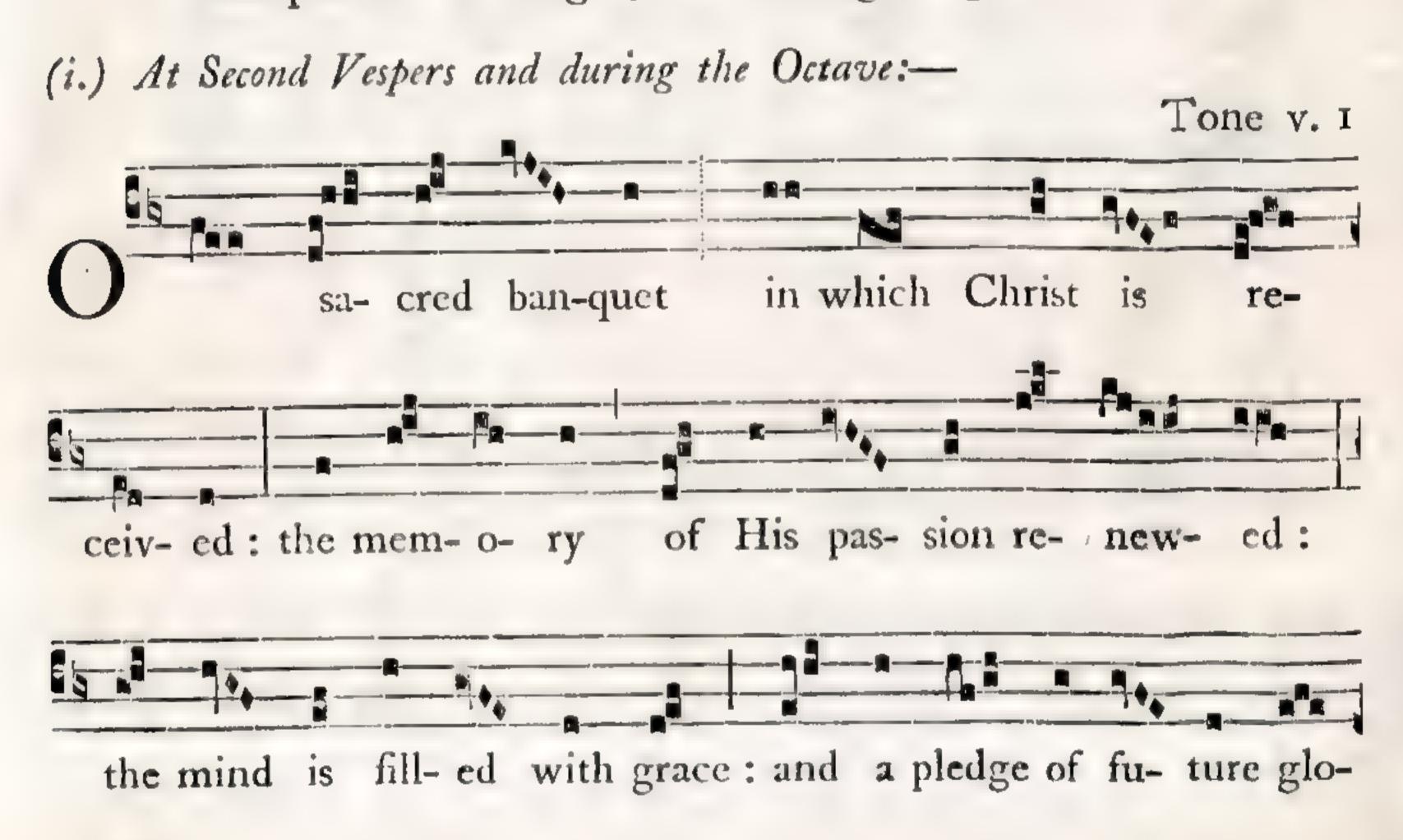


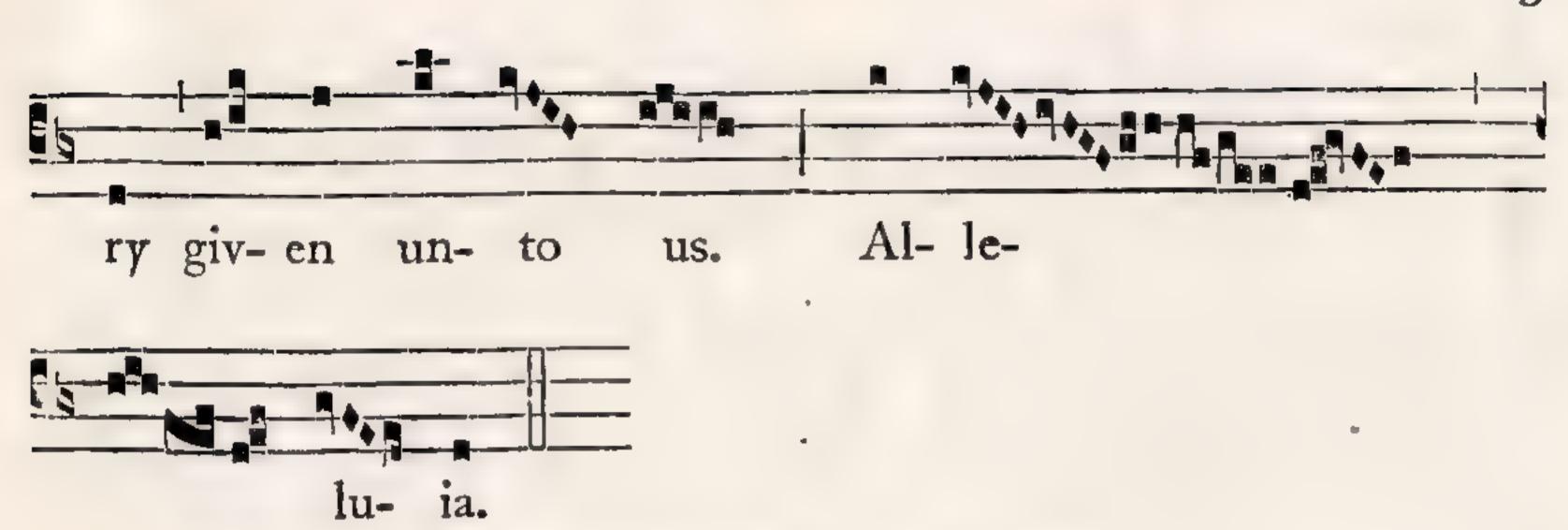




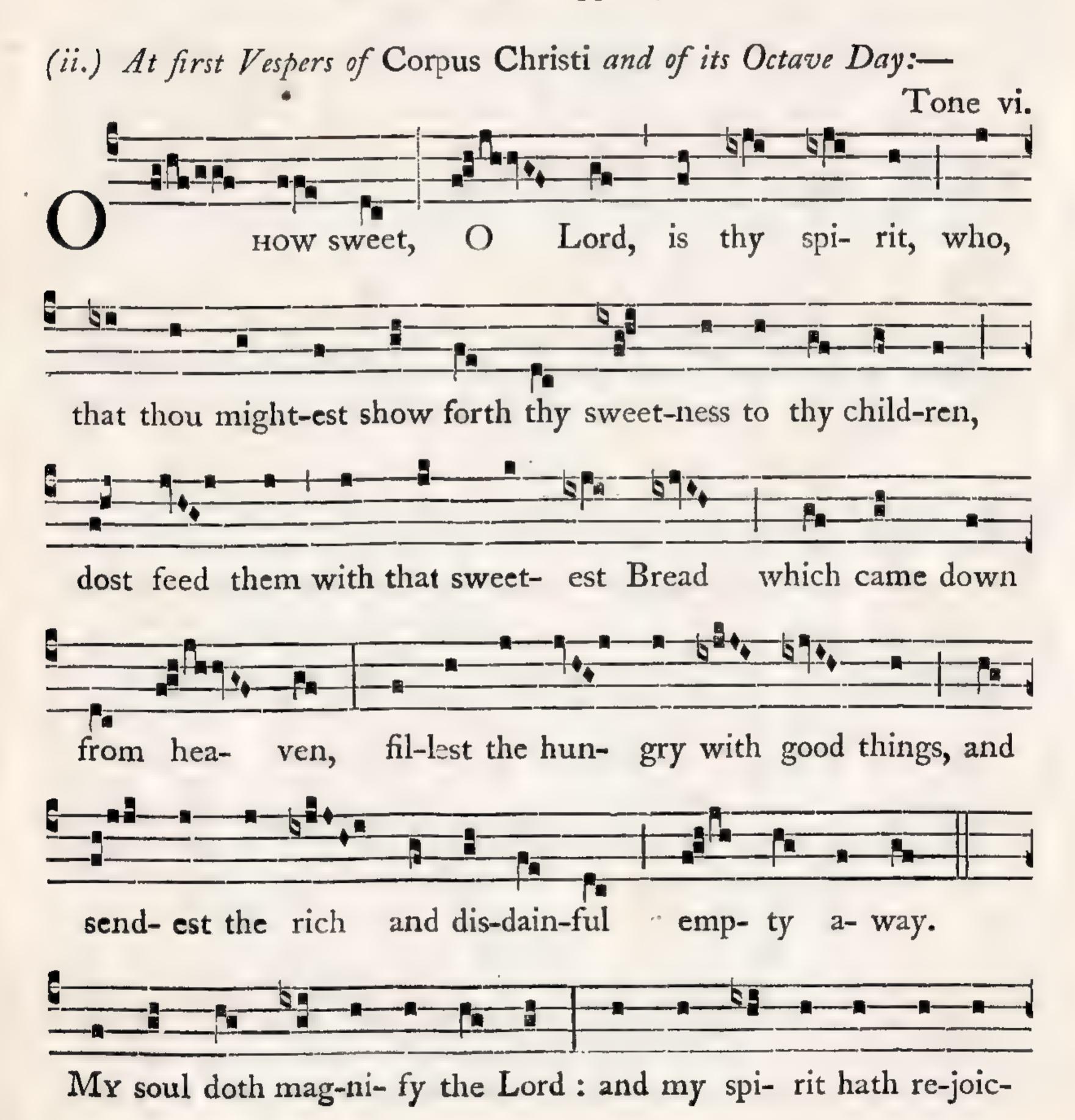


Antiphons to Magnificat during Corpus Christi.

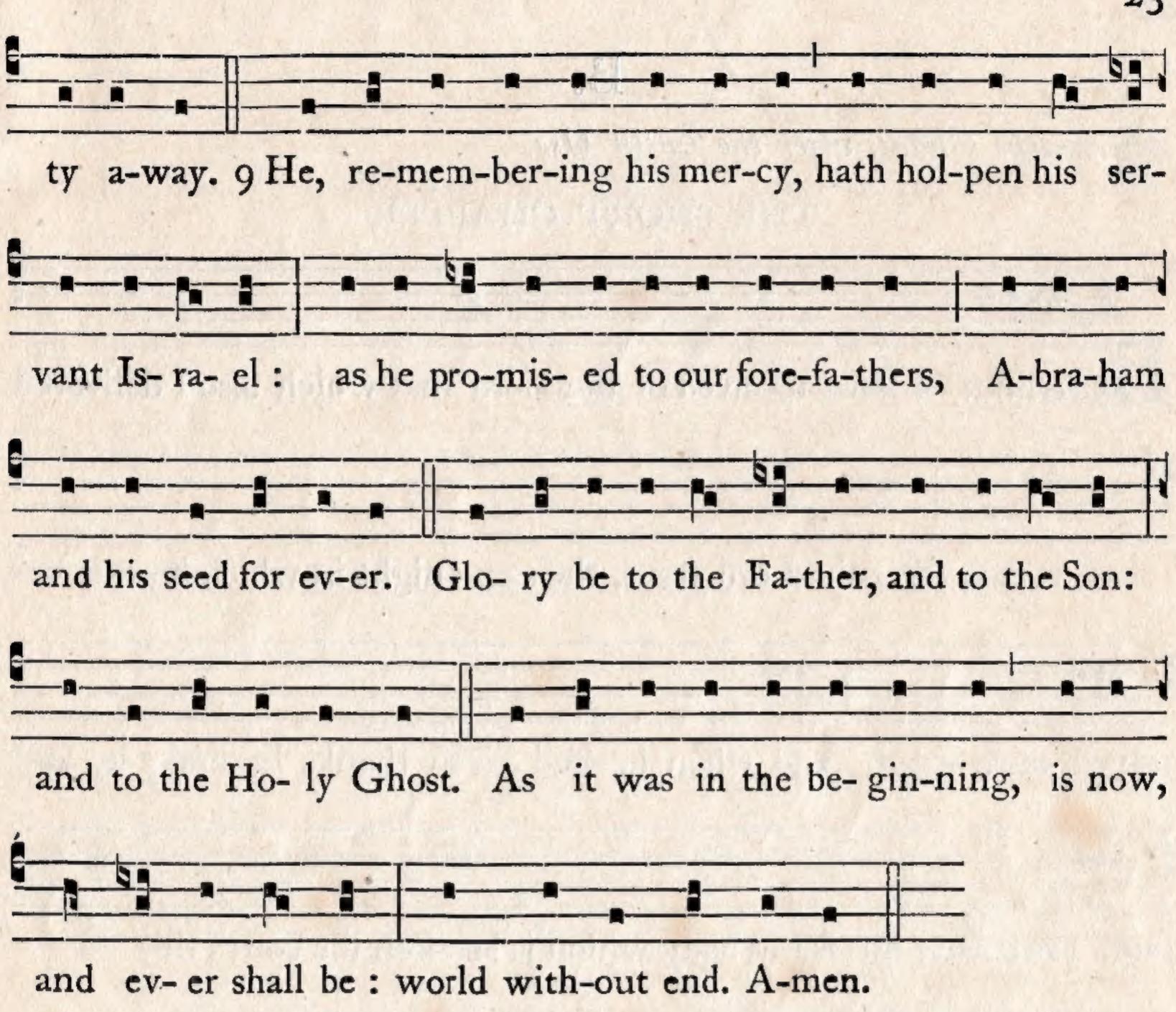




MAGNIFICAT on pp. 14-16.







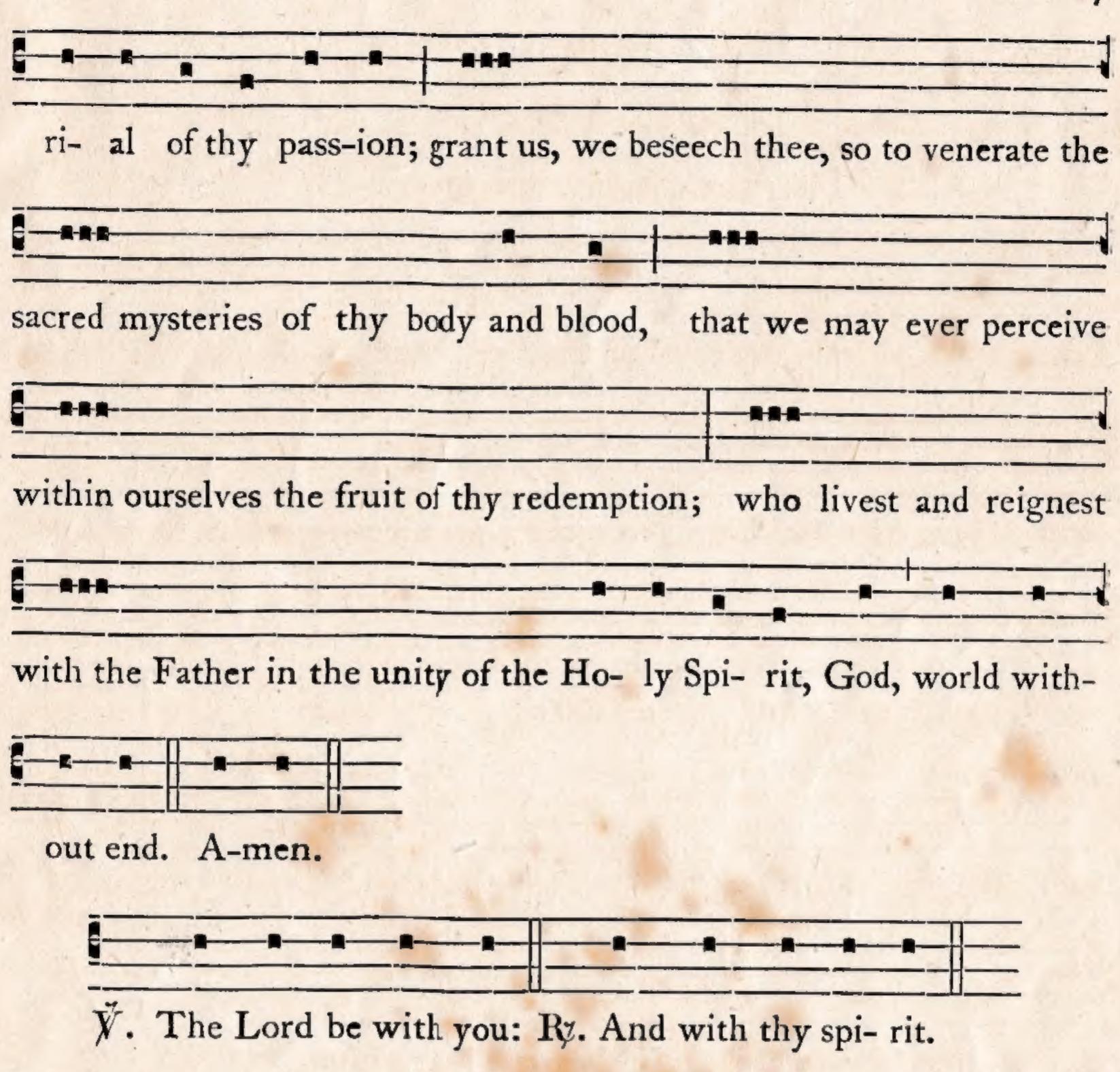
Antiphon on p. 23.

B.

Alternative Chants after the Latin Use.

THE SHORT CHAPTER





V. Let us bless the Lord: Ry. Thanks be to God.